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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ENVR](#) [ASEC](#) [BL](#) [PTER](#)
SUBJECT: GOB BRIEFS DIPLOMATIC CORPS ON "TERRORIST CELL"

REF: A. LA PAZ 593
[1](#)B. LA PAZ 290
[1](#)C. 08 LA PAZ 2483
[1](#)D. 08 LA PAZ 2374

Classified By: Charge Kris Urs for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Bolivian Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera and other senior administration members, during an address to the diplomatic corps on April 21, underscored the seriousness of what they labeled a series of three terrorist attacks and the presence of a terrorist cell with at least ten members. On April 16, Bolivian police forces killed three alleged terrorists in a downtown Santa Cruz hotel (reftel A). In an interview released posthumously, the group's leader advocated the secession of Santa Cruz department, Bolivia's largest and most prosperous state, but explicitly denied having any plans to attack La Paz or overthrow the government. Nevertheless, Garcia Linera repeatedly pledged to carry the investigation to its "final conclusions," raising fears of possible arrests of members of the Santa Cruz-based political opposition. President Evo Morales rejected requests by the Hungarian, Irish, and Croatian governments to investigate the three deaths, saying they had no right to demand explanations. Charge reassured Garcia Linera that there was no USG involvement as per President Obama's recent public statement; the Vice President responded that the GOB knows that the USG is with them. Striking his chest for emphasis, Garcia Linera said "President Obama's words brought us here." End summary.

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Presentation to Diplomatic Corps
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[1](#)2. (C) Following the deaths of three and arrest of two alleged terrorists April 16 in Santa Cruz by the Bolivian SWAT team (reftel A), the Bolivian government has released preliminary results of its ongoing investigation into what it claims is a cell of at least ten terrorists. The government said the group is also responsible for recent attacks on the homes of Deputy Autonomy Minister Saul Avalos and Cardinal

Julio Terrazas. In a packed meeting of the diplomatic corps April 21 in the Presidential Palace's Hall of Mirrors, Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera, Government Minister Alfredo Rada, and Presidency Minister Juan Ramon Quintana justified the killing of the three alleged terrorists and reviewed what they emphasized was just "ten percent" of the information they had captured regarding the group's aims and activities.

VP: "Terrorists" and "Assassins"

13. (C) Garcia Linera noted that after the explosion at Cardinal Terraza's house, the government intensified its focus on the suspected terrorist cell, leading ultimately to the April 16 shootout at the Santa Cruz hotel. He said during the raid the five men attacked the police with gunfire and explosives. The vice president emphasized that the men were neither tourists nor random fanatics, but rather part of a structured terrorist cell that was well-funded and trained to achieve their ultimate goal of secession for Santa Cruz and the assassination of Morales, Garcia Linera, and "three ministers."

Investigation Not a Witch Hunt, Really

14. (C) Garcia Linera told the group of diplomats that La Paz Prosecutor Marcelo Sosa was the case's main investigator and said the government would abide by the results of the investigation, including any established links to Santa Cruz businessmen and/or political opposition members. Garcia Linera said the effort would be impartial and would not be a witch hunt. However, he pledged to take the results of the investigation to their "final conclusion." (Note: Garcia Linera used similarly firm language after the September 2008 violence in Pando (reftel B-D), after which the government illegally jailed Prefect Leopoldo Fernandez and violently detained over forty more, many of them prominent political opposition members. End note.)

Rada: Cell Structure

15. (C) Government Minister Rada discussed the alleged structure of the cell, including the five members found in Bolivia. He said Hungarian-Bolivian Eduardo Rozsa Flores was the leader of the group, that he had obtained the rank of colonel in the Croatian army, and was believed to be responsible for the murder of a journalist in Croatia. Rada described Irishman Michael Martin Dwyer as second-in-command, saying he had military and security experience. Rada said Romanian-born Hungarian Arpad Magyarosi was used as a sharpshooter/sniper. Rada referred to the two captured men, Mario Tadic Astorga (a Croatian-Bolivian) and Elod Toaso (a Hungarian), as a member of the Croat army responsible for the Terrazas attack and as the main computer specialist, respectively. Rada said that in addition to the five captured or killed, information seized by the police indicated there were others involved.

16. (C) Rada reported that after the gun battle, the police found pistols, dynamite, C4 explosives, and ammunition corresponding to 5.56mm weapons. Noting that the weapons cache found at the Cotas stand in the ExpoCruz fairgrounds did not include any weapons of this type, he said there were likely other weapons caches in the ExpoCruz area. (Note: The Embassy participates in the ExpoCruz fair only through its association with the American Chamber of Commerce, and does not have its own stand or storage area. End note.) Rada said the materiel seized corresponded to the explosive devices left at both Avalos' and Cardinal Terrazas' homes, which included dynamite, C4, nails, and other metal pieces. He then indicated the government had information showing the group's next attacks included the president, vice president, and three ministers (whom Rada left unnamed).

VP: We Want Your Help

¶7. (C) Garcia Linera spoke again, saying there was much more information to be reviewed. He said the group had maps of Bolivian military bases they apparently planned to attack, that they were recruiting other members, and that they had "specialized arms" even the Bolivian government did not possess. The vice president said they found many photos, some including Bolivians from Santa Cruz and Beni, and that they were in the process of identifying these people. He insisted the photos were not "montages" or otherwise-assembled works by the government, and that the photos also indicated there had been plans for an attack around the January 25 constitutional referendum which did not come to pass. He specifically referred to a photo of Rozsa with Cruceno autonomy activist Mauricio Iturri and averred that he was trained by Rozsa. Garcia Linera ended with a simple plea to the assembled group, saying "we want your help."

Quintana: Troop Movements

¶8. (C) Presidency Minister Quintana then took the floor briefly to note that, in his opinion, the attacks occurred because the political opposition created a context in which they were possible and because the government's authority in the area was not strong enough. He identified six border provinces within Santa Cruz department where the government would deploy troops to strengthen control.

Questions Remain

¶9. (C) Despite the GOB's coordinated presentation that maintained the group's intentions to assassinate the president, in an interview with Hungarian television (released posthumously and characterized as his "final testimony"), Rozsa explicitly stated he did not seek to attack the central government in La Paz or to assassinate Morales or other administration officials. In a conversation with Charge after the administration's presentation, the German DCM remarked that it seemed there was "not enough" to justify the government's claims of a well-funded terrorist network, given that the supposed terrorists were easily captured and did not appear to be well trained.

Charge Press Statement

¶10. (U) After the presentation, Charge met briefly with the press, saying that "if asked" the USG would be pleased to study potential assistance we could give to the investigation. The Cubans offered assistance as well.

Morales Gets Mad at Europe

¶11. (U) In a press conference later on April 21, President Morales bristled at requests by the governments of Hungary, Ireland, and Croatia for more information about the deaths of their citizens. Morales said the three countries "have no authority to ask me for an explanation... I am tempted to sue them, that is what I want to do, but I am not a lawyer. How can they defend people who came here to attack the president? That is very grave. I could think that they (the governments) were the ones who sent them in to attack me, to attack democracy." Irish Foreign Minister Michael Martin said Morales was being unreasonable and mentioned evidence suggesting the three men died in an "ambush" and not in a prolonged gun battle. Similarly, Hungarian Foreign Minister

Peter Balazs said he doubted Rozsa and the others were plotting assassinations. "We can assume they were the victims of domestic Bolivian politics," he said.

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Comment
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¶12. (C) While the existence of a paramilitary group dedicated to the defense and potential secession of Santa Cruz seems clear, the other goals attributed to the group by the Bolivian government are more difficult to verify. Observers fear the government may leverage the group's presence to go after the political opposition in Santa Cruz, similar to their round-up of Pando political opposition. Just as in Pando, the government has claimed sole prosecution authority falls in the hands of police and investigators from La Paz. Post notes that ex-Pando Prefect (and Morales rival) Fernandez has now been in prison for seven months under dubious legal pretext and without a trial. We are also wary, given the president's penchant for accusing the Embassy of supporting the opposition (and despite the vice president's chest-pounding affirmation to Charge), of a potential GOB accusation that the Embassy or the USG generally supported Rozsa's "terrorist" attacks. End comment.
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